

## **SYLVANUS COLLETT.**

### **Biography from the Lehi Centennial History**

Among the early settlers of Lehi were Daniel Collett and family, the eldest son being Sylvanus, then a young man about 21. Sylvanus' mother's name was Esther Jones, a native of Wales, while his father was an Englishman of Norman ancestry.

The youth of "Syl" Collett, as he was familiarly called, did not prevent him from playing a prominent part in the early days of Lehi and Utah county. Were there Indians to subdue, he was always one of the first to respond to the call to arms. He was of heroic physique, tall, straight, broad shouldered, and athletic, and he was entirely without fear. If a parley with the Indians was necessary, "Syl" was usually chosen, as he talked the vernacular of the natives as though to the manner born.

While living at Lehi, Sylvanus Collett married Lydia Karren, a daughter of Thomas Karren, and their first son, Sylvanus, Jr., was drowned in the creek near Lehi.

In the early "sixties" Sylvanus Collett removed to Cache Valley, acquiring an extensive ranch where Cache Junction now stands, his father meanwhile being one of the first four men to settle in Plain City, Weber County.

At Logan, "Syl" Collett was a colonel of militia in the Nauvoo Legion, and took part in the Indian war at Smithfield in 1863. After one or two men had been killed, the Indian chief was captured and held under guard by Colonel Collett, E. R. Miles, and Thomas Winn. The chief's sons came near to the settlement, and at a signal the father made a dash for liberty. Three shots rang out, the redskin leaped high into the air and when he struck the ground he was a "good Injun." The writer of this sketch once asked Mr. Winn his opinion as to whose shot put a quietus on the desperado, and he laconically replied: "I am no marksman, and Miles was but little better; "Syl" could hit a fly's heel a thousand yards with a blank cartridge."

In the winter of 1863 occurred the famous fight with Indians on Battle Creek, in southern Idaho, when General Connor of Fort Douglas wiped out a combination of Bannocks, Snakes, and Shoshones, but with a loss to his own men that made a decided nucleus to the military cemetery on the bench east of Salt Lake City.

A short time previous to the engagement, Colonel Collett and Thomas E. Ricks went as special envoys from the Cache Valley settlers to the entrenched Indians on Battle Creek, and secured the return of some animals that the redskins had stolen a short time before.

When the Fort Douglas army reached Logan, General Connor summoned Messrs. Collett and Ricks and went over the situation with them. When a suggestion was offered as to the mode of attack, the intrepid general curtly replied: "Gentlemen, I am asking for information, not advice." From a nearby eminence, Colonel Collett and Dudley D. Merrill witnessed the slaughter of General Connor's men, until late in the day, when a wicked fire from howitzers mounted on mules' backs ended the affray in the almost complete annihilation of the Indians. Colonel Collett always averred that Chief Pocatello was not in the Battle Creek fight, local history to the contrary notwithstanding, and he knew thoroughly well whereof he spoke.

After leaving Cache Valley, Sylvanus Collett lived for a while in Nounan Valley, Bear Lake County, Idaho, where he grazed large herds of horses, cattle, and sheep, from whence he removed to Smith's Fork, now Cokeville, Wyoming, where he lived the remainder of his life, engaged in mining, stock raising, and kindred pursuits. He died while on a visit to Salt Lake City, April 10, 1901.

"Syl" Collett possessed characteristics that endeared him to all who had his acquaintance. To his bravery, before alluded to, were added a loyalty to friend and a kindly and charitable consideration for foe in remarkable degree. Of the latter phase of his disposition note the following incident: Through his instrumentality a malefactor was being turned over to officers of the law. The man raved and swore vengeance at the first opportunity. "Syl" unbuckled a horse pistol from his belt and handed it to the culprit with the remark: "Please don't shoot me in the back." The

weapon was returned unused.